



# Catnip Castle

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## TOOLS:

- [3/8" wood drill bit \(1\)](#)  
*6" or longer.*
- [9/32" wood drill bit \(1\)](#)  
*6" or longer.*
- [48" ruler \(1\)](#)
- [Hand saw \(1\)](#)  
*or reciprocating saw.*
- [Heavy objects \(1\)](#)  
*to weigh down glued boards I used a large piece of plywood, plus several unopened bags of plaster.*
- [Hot glue gun \(1\)](#)
- [Jigsaw \(1\)](#)
- [Level \(1\)](#)
- [No. 2 pencil \(1\)](#)
- [Paintbrush \(1\)](#)  
*wallpaper brush, and trim guide for spreading glue; available at paint supply stores.*
- [Power Drill \(1\)](#)
- [Ratchet \(1\)](#)  
*with 1/2" socket.*
- [Utility knife \(1\)](#)  
*Sharp utility/camping knife.*
- [Vacuum cleaner \(1\)](#)



## PARTS:

- [36"x48" corrugated cardboard \(35\)](#)  
*Available in bundles of 50 from [uline.com](#). You only need 35 boards, but it's good to have extra so you can select the most perfect ones.*
- [Catnip \(1\)](#)  
*dried and loose.*
- [Cat treats \(1\)](#)  
*Liv-a-Littles cod treats ([halopets.com](#)) work exceptionally well.*
- [3/8" washers, 2" diameter \(4\)](#)
- [8"x2" lag bolts \(4\)](#)
- [Carpenter's glue \(1\)](#)

## SUMMARY

As a pet lifestyle expert, I'm often asked the question, "What do cats want?" The answer is simple: A fun outlet for their instinctive needs to scratch and climb.

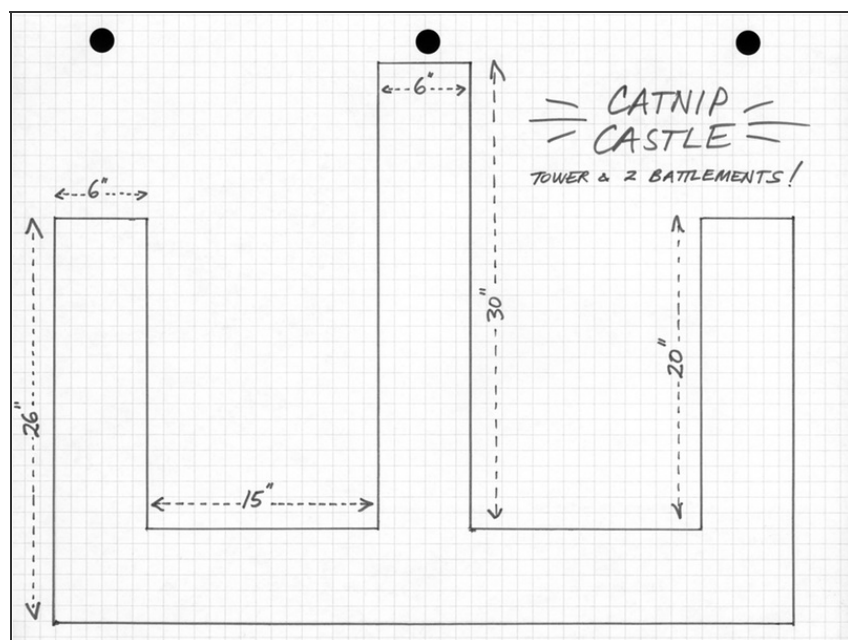
Unfortunately, most commercial pet playgrounds consist of towers (aka "cat condos") and scratching posts swathed in hideous nylon broadloom.

If you dread displaying these eyesores at home, you can now make your very own Catnip Castle. Easy to craft out of corrugated cardboard, it mounts to the wall, niftily saving room in small spaces. While the Castle's sculptural lines are aesthetically appealing, it also works as furniture insurance, keeping Kitty's claws gainfully occupied.

**Step 1 — Glue the cardboard together.**

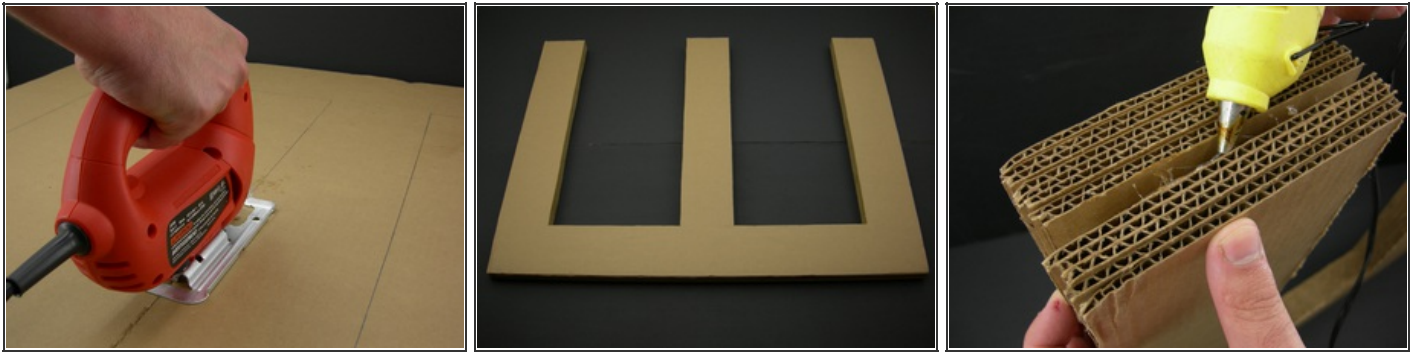
- Pour carpenter's glue generously onto the center of the first board, then spread the glue out with the brush and trim guide. Take care not to pour it on too thick near the edges, or the glue will seep out, leaving unsightly ooze that dries yellow. Lay the next board on top of the glued board, taking care to match up the corners, and repeat until you've attached 10 cardboard pads together. Repeat this process with the next 10 pads. Finally, glue 15 pads together the same way. You now have 2 cardboard blocks of 10-pad thickness and 1 of 15-pad thickness.
- Carefully place something heavy and flat over each stack, such as a piece of plywood, taking care not to shift the boards, and leave to dry and adhere for several hours, or even overnight.

## Step 2 — Create a design.



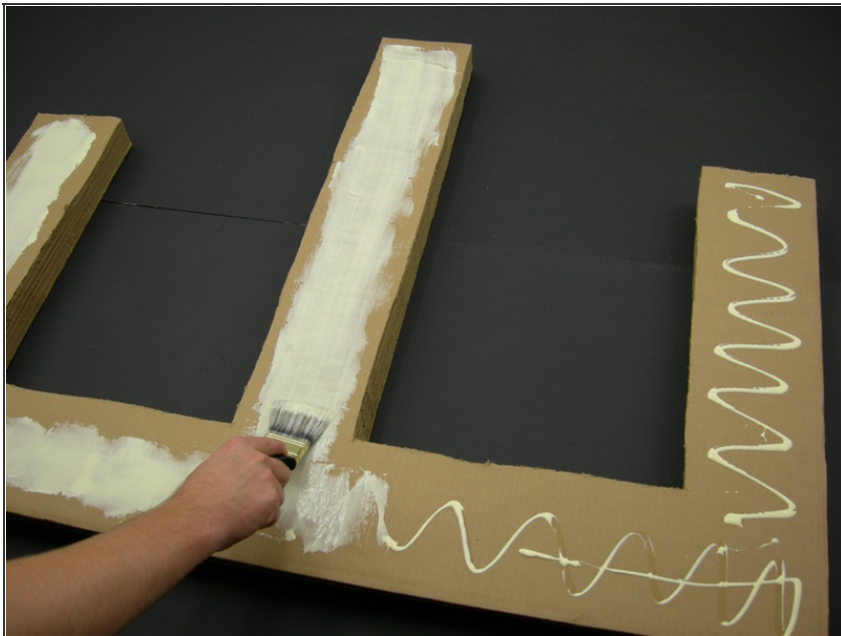
- I explain how to create an abstract castle featuring a tall central tower flanked by a battlement on either side. Of course design possibilities are limitless, and whether you want to duplicate my design or create your own is up to you.
- Take one of the stacked pads and, following the diagram shown here, start at one 48" edge and mark the following points with your ruler: 6", 21", 27", and 42". Then mark 6" up from the bottom at all 4 points, and rule the lines down to those points. Repeat with the other 2 stacks.
- Note: If you're designing your own cat pad, plan ahead and draw a diagram on graph paper before beginning the project.

### Step 3 — Saw and adhere.



- Saw carefully along the lines drawn. Repeat until all 3 cardboard stacks have the Castle shape.
- To create the “battlements” on either side of the central “tower,” rule a line 10" down from the top on each, and saw carefully along the lines. Remember to keep your jig saw moving; if you need to stop in the middle of a line, do not turn off the saw; keep it running or you'll produce a raggedy effect.
- When you saw through the section that's 15 pads thick, you will need to complete the sawing job with a hand- saw (I used a pull saw) or reciprocating saw with a long enough blade.
- Check the edges of each section carefully. You want them to be securely glued. If they're not, they will come apart and fan out a bit at the edges. If this happens, carefully use a glue gun to insert hot glue between the boards, and then press them together again.

## Step 4 — Saw and adhere, continued.



- Glue together the 3 sections comprising the Castle, so that you now have a stack of 35 pads. Stacked and glued together, 35 boards will measure approximately 53/4" deep.
- As before, weigh them down until they are dry, carefully keeping the edges as flush as possible. Repeat with the 3 sections that comprise the stepping blocks.
- Note: You can smooth down any offending imperfections with a jigsaw, or a reciprocating saw with a blade at least 6" long. Before using the jigsaw to carve out the rectangular steps (15"×30") that lead up to the Castle, first make a pilot cut pointing straight down at each corner with your utility/camping knife to ensure the cleanest possible corners.

## Step 5 — Size to fit.



- Customize the design so that it works most efficiently in your space. The number of corrugated stepping blocks you will need to provide for Kitty to reach the Castle depends on the height of your ceiling. If it's low, you'll need only 1 on each side; higher ceilings will require 2 on each side.
- Because my wall is only about 8' high, I needed only 1 step on either side of the Castle for Kitty to reach her goal, so I divided one of my 15"×30" blocks equally into 3 sections measuring 10"×15" each.
- If you have a taller ceiling, you can use the 10" long pieces you sawed off to create the battlements as 2 additional, smaller steps, or saw the third 10"×15" section in half. If you'd prefer 2 taller steps, saw the second 15"×30" block in half lengthwise for two 7½"×30" steps, and shorten by sawing as desired.
- Alternatively, you can also attach your Castle to a wall above a piece of furniture, such as a sofa or chest of drawers. With that configuration, Kitty can use the furniture as a springboard to reach the Castle.

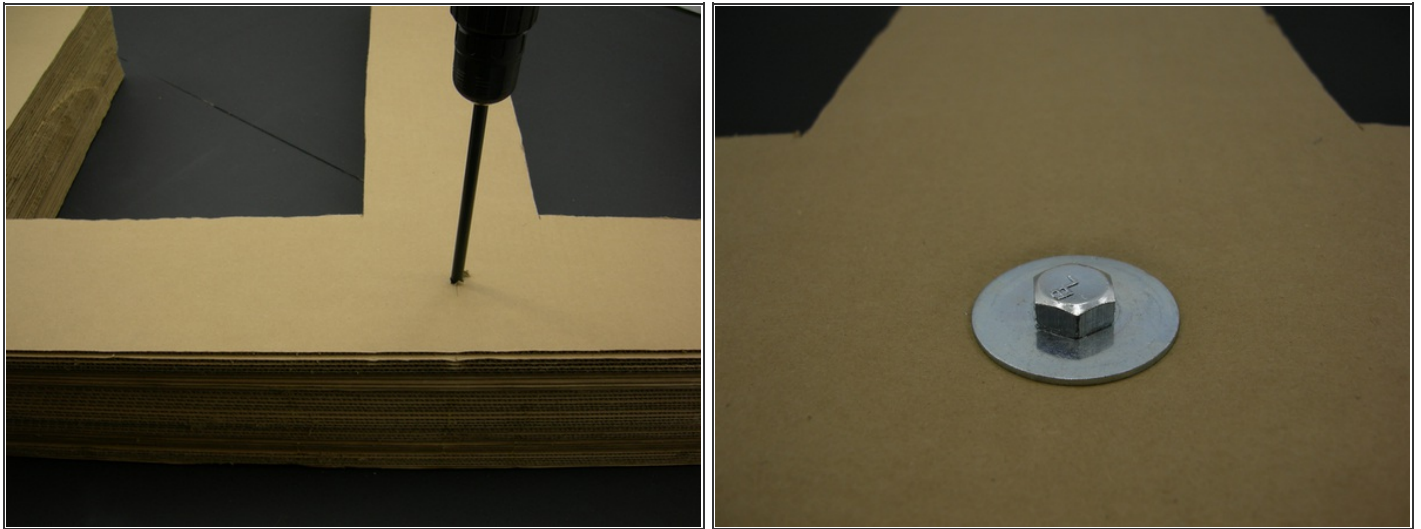


## Step 6 — Install.



- To determine your Castle location, find the studs in your wall. An electronic stud detector is a wonderful thing, and if you know someone who has one, by all means borrow it. I used the more primitive divining method of knocking at the walls.
- Note: you'll need different supplies depending on the type of wall. If your wall has aluminum studs (as ours did), you'll need only the supplies listed, plus a wood bit. If you're working with a brick-and-concrete wall, you'll need to drill holes with a masonry bit, then use a hammer to insert lag shields measuring 2"×1¾", to serve as anchors for the lag bolts.
- Use a pencil to mark the wall where the Castle's top edge will go, and use a level (this is a large item, and if it's not level, it will look sadly amateurish). It's important that the Castle be attached solidly to the wall so it doesn't wobble; if it moves when Kitty first jumps on it, she won't feel safe jumping on it again.
- For petite Mademoiselle, I centered 2 bolts on the central tower plus one for each stepping block. (For a heavier cat or multiple cats, 2 bolts per stepping block are recommended, plus one centered on each battlement.)
- Use a pencil to mark the first drill hole 3" up from the bottom of the tower, and the second one 10" from the tower top, aligned with the top of the battlements.
- For the stepping blocks, avoid placing your drill hole at the center, or the block is liable to spin around and deter Kitty. I centered it 3" down from the top (narrow) edge.



**Step 7 — Install, continued.**

- Using a 2" drill bit long enough to go through the 6" of cardboard, drill through your pencil markings all the way to the other side.
- Have a friend help you hold the Castle up to the wall, lining it up with the marks you made for the top edge, and insert a pencil into each hole to mark where you'll be drilling on the wall (this helps ensure accuracy). Then lay the Castle back down on the floor and drill 2" into the wall at each marked point, with the u" drill bit.
- Put each lag bolt and washer together, then insert into the drill holes. Using a ratchet, screw into the wall until snug.
- Note: tighten until the cardboard surrounding the bolts is compressed slightly, as shown (you don't want them too tight or too loose).

## Step 8 — Say “here, kitty kitty!”



- To attract Kitty to her new playground, rub it thoroughly with organic dried catnip. Crush the catnip between your fingers to release the aroma and make it extra fragrant. Then rub catnip all over the sawn surfaces, using extra for the sides of the central tower to lure her up there. If Kitty isn't compelled to make the initial leap, insert small pieces of her favorite dry treat in the corrugate openings; that'll get her moving.
- So, how does the Castle rate with the toughest customer, a domestic short-hair cat? Mademoiselle, my pastel calico model, wouldn't say, but her reaction spoke volumes. As soon as the Castle was installed, she promptly got busy connecting with her inner tiger, navigating the vertical maze, scratching, stretching, leaping, pausing calmly atop a battlement to groom herself and purr with satisfaction, and generally regarding the Catnip Castle as her royal domain.

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This project first appeared in [CRAFT Volume 01](#), page 94-101.

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